

Floodmas

by Kireteiru

Category: Halo
Genre: Family, Humor
Language: English
Characters: Fred-104, Master Chief/John-117
Status: Completed
Published: 2012-12-25 20:10:10
Updated: 2012-12-25 20:10:10
Packaged: 2016-04-27 02:55:46
Rating: T
Chapters: 1
Words: 2,405
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: Parallel'verse. "YOU ARE NOW UNDER ATTACK. Choose your weapon and prepare for battle!"

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Rating: T
>Warnings: violence, language
Pairings: background ChiefxCortana, nothing explicit
>Summary: Parallel'verse. "YOU ARE NOW UNDER ATTACK. Choose your weapon and prepare for battle!"<p>

A/N: Prompt based on a picture Gyaku and I saw on iFunny. A wife welcomed her husband home by presenting him with a nerf gun and telling him that he was under attack. (There was also a bit about the person with the most "kills" topping, but I chose not to put that in.) On with the story!

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><p>Floodmas

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><p>"You are now under attack. Choose your weapon and prepare for battle!"

John groaned aloud and smacked his forehead when he caught sight of the notice attached to several of the transports in the docking bay. "I know we're off-duty," he grunted, rubbing his temples, "I know that if you want to get technical, we're not actually on-duty unless there's a quarantine to be maintained. And I know that all of us have racked up enough leave time to spend a century on a resort planet somewhere, but seriously, would it kill them to act like the professional fighting force they are now and then?!"

"Apparently so."

"Was that sarcasm, Naomi? - Don't answer that." The Flood!Spartan strode over to the weapons racks. "Switch our your weapons and let's go. These are outfitted with training rounds. At least we can tell Lord Hood that you didn't slack off at this party."

His brothers and sisters examined the Forerunner guns. A handful of teams already had experienced them, largely those who had come from Installation Zero-Five to Earth via Truth's Dreadnought. They quickly caught the rest up on what equated to what and divvied up the weapons and ammo amongst themselves. John didn't appear to have picked up anything, making several Spartans look at him questioningly.

He smirked faintly, barely more than a twitch of his lips, and held out an arm. Starting from his shoulder and rippling down to his wrist, some of the armor plates protecting him detached from their moorings and zipped down to form a Suppressor in his hand, the remaining plates shifting to cover the gaps. The Gravemind had a lightrifle disassembled on his other arm. That explained why the plates on his arms had looked different " because some of it wasn't armor at all.

* * *

><p>The battlefield was absolute chaos. Of course, that's what happened when you crammed over a hundred thousand people into one section of a ship, even if said ship was large enough in its entirety to hold twice as many people.<p>

Cortana darted between two Lituni who had they backs turned to each other and wiggled under a fallen piece of hard light faÃ§ade. She had been surprised from behind by a Mavalt and panicked; the sentient plants were pacifists in the extreme, so she hadn't been expecting them to participate in such a violent Christmas celebration. She supposed the Flood could do that to anyone, and pegged one in the small of its back with the Forerunner equivalent of a paint ball. Its armor froze it in place before it fell over, the computer adding 10 points to the AI's score.

A doorbell rang in her ears. Cortana smiled and scrambled through the battlefield to a "safe zone." The moment she entered the blocked off area, her weapon " a boltshot " deactivated. She waved to the Infected resting there. Reina, Gramlek's assistant, was nursing a black eye, and Sairin was tending to her. There were no other serious injuries " yet.

Sensing that she was no longer distracted, John said, [How's it going?] The Spartan knew that she absolutely hated it when alien presences invaded her systems, so he made it a point to alert her when he wanted to communicate before doing so.

'Great,' she replied over the transcom system built into her synthetic body, 'It's gotten crazier as more people have come to play. Even Fenix and HrÃ-vÃ« are around here somewhere.'

[Well, it's nice to know that _someone_'s having fun. I'm sending in the other Spartans so they can get used to fighting people who can share minds and adapt quickly on the battlefield,] he warned her,

[There's no telling what the P'vort will have done to themselves since Epheria and Selenica were ousted from the Tower, so we need to be ready for everything.] She _sensed:_ his attention go elsewhere for a moment. [I'll be joining in after a few. I have a few things I need to take care of. Want to help?]

'Urgh, no!' Even though he couldn't see it at the moment, the AI made a face. 'Forerunner paper-pushing is tedious, even for me.'

The rogue snorted. [I'll see you in a bit, then.] The sensor data burst that followed equated to a gentle peck on her lips. Cortana smiled and refocused on the battlefield in time to see a squad of Spartans race by and take cover behind a large cargo module. One of them, Serin-019, noticed her and briefly lifted a hand in greeting.

She saw their targets: the twins, both of whom had "50" painted on their armor. They had backed themselves into a corner and stood so that their backs were to a wall or each other. The two Warrior-Servants were gunning at anything that came within range, Venera wielding a lightrifle and Kenera blasting away with a scattershot.

Suddenly, their heads snapped around, eyes widening in panic before they bolted, abandoning defense in favor of escape. Seconds later, Gramlek sprinted by with an incineration cannon on his shoulder, "45" on his armor. His face had the look of one intent on his goal, and the Infected and Spartans alike scattered before him.

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><p>"Oh, Goddesses, I'm DYING!"<p>

"Quit bitching â€" it was your own fault." John finished rinsing out Venera's eyes and handed her some drops. She had accidentally taken a training round to the face. Her shields had taken the brunt of the hit, but the round had fractured and sent pieces into her eyes. Said Forerunner was being melodramatic about it as usual. "You're the one who came up with this bright idea."

Her twin came over, bearing two plates piled high with food. Cortana was right behind her with the same. "I'm surprised they couldn't hear you at the outpost on Charum Hakkor," said the AI, "How are you doing?"

"Better." Venera surveyed the gathering. The battlefield had been replaced by numerous long tables with round ones spread out between them. At the head of the hall, Promethean Knights were serving the Infected, the Spartans, Lord Hood, the Arbiter, Shipmaster Vadum, the Keyes', Johnson, and Doctor Halsey and CPO Mendez, who had elected to join their soiree. The tables were filled with turkey, ham, chicken, beef, lobster, crab, oysters, honey-glazed salmon, mahi-mahi, carp, catfish, mashed potatoes and gravy, rolls, breadsticks, yams and sweet potatoes, green beans and bacon, deviled eggs, squash casserole, macaroni and cheese, fruit salad, regular salad, cranberries, tortellini soup, fettuccini alfredo, spaghetti and meatballs, quesadillas, enchiladas, and a kind of pineapple dish with nuts, in addition to native dishes from Sangheilios and the Infected's homeworlds, including halgengei. Dessert consisted of everything under the sun, from many flavors of pie to just as many of

cake, cookies, brownies, dump cakes, turnovers, custards like flan and crÃme brÃe, ice cream, gelato, sorbet, beignets, many kinds of cobblers, cheesecakes, candies from twenty-five pound Hershey bars to a kind of Gultanr sweet the size of a sprinkle, and pastries like baklava, cannolis, and strudel.

The Spartans elected to try the halgengei that the Chief had had such problems with, and according to them it wasn't that bad â in the words of Simba from Lion King, "Slimy yet satisfying." They passed a bowl of it around, Johnson stealing a few bites, but Lord Hood gave it a look of disgust.

Noticing, John said, "We're not going to go to war with you over culinary hospitality. If you don't like the looks of it, don't eat it!"

A few of the Infected were forced to hide their snickers when Hood looked faintly relieved. Meanwhile, the Arbiter and Rtas had begun perusing the varieties of food from all over the galaxy. Some of the evil alien parasites from space were able to direct them to examples of human and Forerunner foods that were also to their tastes.

"And how are you all feeling?" John peered down at his brothers and sisters.

"Exhausted, sir."

"Don't call me that; I'm not your superior officer." John shot a small glare at Kelly, who had tilted her head back to look at him from upside down. "Do you want your gifts now or later?"

"You didn't have to buy us something." Cassandra had her elbows propped up on the table, her chin resting on her palms.

The rogue opened his mouth to say something right before someone at another table let out an explosive belch, followed by an "Excuse me." He made an unimpressed face before trying again. "I believe that the most suitable gift I can give you is a set of Class Thirty-Eight standard armor and combat wrap each. I tried to make it Class Forty-Seven, like what I'm wearing now, but the Didact wouldn't have it. We had to fight tooth and nail to get you that."

The Spartans perked up at the mention of new armor. "Really?" It was James' turn to speak up. "You're giving us Forerunner armor? Aren't you worried that ONI will get ahold of it?"

John smirked again, faintly. "The armor set you get won't work for anyone but you," he said, "If anyone else tries, it'll lock up. They can try to reverse-engineer it, but humanity's present technological tier isn't high enough to manufacture it right now."

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><p>The trip to the Storm's armory reminded them of Delta Halo. Just like when Blue Team went to assassinate Regret, they took a gondola through the final stretch of the ship between them and the amrory. It was primarily used to carry cargo and repair materials to the sections where they were needed. Though John assured them that they were safe onboard his ship, the Spartans still half-expected someone or something to pop out of nowhere and attack them. "We

haven't exactly had the best of experiences with Forerunner constructs of all kinds," Fred said needlessly.

"Yes," stated John, "I know." His tone revealed amusement that his face did not. He stood at parade rest near the top of the gondola. Halsey was near him, but this time she was more interested in the hard light beam that carried them rather than the rogue Spartan.

A large eagle raced overhead, making the Spartans' hands drop to their weapons, but it offered no fire. "You have infected animals here?"

"Yes, we do," was the reply, "The Librarian's indexing a hundred thousand years ago caused extinction events on hundreds of worlds, and she was unable to recreate their habitats before the Great Cataclysm, so we preserve them here. They were actually infected through prolonged exposure to our Flood spores" and it's nothing you need to worry about. Barring divine intervention, your bodies would die of old age and rot away before we could get any kind of foothold inside you." The Commander straightened. "We're here."

The gondola stopped in front of a pair of massive blast doors. A pair of steel arms unfolded from below the doors, a light bridge solidifying above them a few seconds later. John strode across it and stopped in front of the doors. At his mental touch, the lock at the center spun and clicked, leaving the enormous plates free to retract.

Inside were rows upon rows upon rows of Forerunner weapons, including some that they had never seen before. There were war sphinxes off to one side, countless racks of suppressors and light rifles, incineration cannons, even some UNSC standard issue. John ran a hand lightly over a human assault rifle. "We've been using them as test subjects, to attempt what you saw earlier. We can do the disassembly, but we're still working on the part placement and reassembly." He turned back to his family. "Now, who wants to go first?"

The humans all looked at one another for a moment, then Fred stepped forward. "I'll go. What do I need to do?"

"Strip down and stand on this platform." Said platform was a circle of chrome raised ever so slightly from the rest of the floor. Once Fred had done as he asked, John said, "Now raise your arms to shoulder level and hold that position." At his prodding, the pedestal rippled under the Spartan's feet. Long silver ribbons with sky blue articulation points began climbing his body and wrapping around his limbs, and though he looked visibly uncomfortable, the Senior Chief let it happen. About two minutes later, he was fully attired in the standard armor of a Forerunner. An additional minute, and the combat wrap formed over the underarmor, rippling and taking on a reasonable facsimile of the Spartans' MJOLNIR armor.

The Commander gestured for the human to test his strength on a three-inch piece of Forerunner steel. As he wound up for the punch and unleashed his attack, he felt a ripple in the armor travel from his shoulder to the knuckles of his fist.

It went straight through with an explosive clang. "That was equivalent to six feet of regular steel." There were a few sharp inhaled breaths from the others.

"That ripple you felt was the force amplifiers in the armor," John explained, pleased, "Right now they're set to four times magnification, but they can go up to eight if you're willing to risk injury. They can also be set to restrict your abilities, which is what mine do. That's how we-" being the Infected, "-get stronger without appearing to do extensive training.

"Now, who's next?"

"ME!"

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><p>AN: Happy Halodays everyone! Boring, yes, I know, but now we know a little more about the Infected's custom armor.

End
file.